(c) the measures proposed to help the distressed cotton farmers to save them from the clutches of middlemen?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) No, Sir. Cotton is sold in the market yards in open auction where both the agencies i.e. respective State Marketing Federations (In Andhra Pradesh, A.P. State Marketing Federation) and the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) participate. Hence, cotton is sold in the market at competitive prices. However, those farmers who do not participate in the open auctions but prefer to sell at village levels, in such cases it is likely that they may not get competitive prices.

(b) and (c) To safeguard the interests of the cotton growers, the Government of India announces every year the Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) of cotton for F-414/H-777 and H-4 varieties to give incentive to the farmers for higher investment and adoption of modern techniques. The prices of other varieties of cotton are fixed by the Ministry of Textiles on the basis of price differentials of these two basic varieties. The MSP for 1997-98 crop season has been fixed at Rs. 1330 per quintal for F-414/H-777 and Rs. 1530 per quintal for H-4 variety. The wholesale prices in the open market including those in Andhra Pradesh have been ruling above the MSPs.

Changes in Farm Practices

1669. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are contemplating to induce changes in the existing system of farm practices;

(b) if so, on what aspects of farm practices the new policy will be focusing;

(c) whether it is a fact that in some area farmers are over-using fertilizers and pesticides;

(d) the agencies which will be used to educate farmers about the optimal use of land, water and genetic resources; and

(e) the other details thereof

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) Government proposes to induce changes in existing farming practices by popularsing cropping system based agriculture on watershed basis in rainfed areas, diversification of cultivation, adoption of better water conservation techniques such as sprinkler/drip irrigations methods, etc.

(c) Average consumption of fertilisers and pesticides in India is on lower side as compared to several other countries though wide variations in consumption are observed across States and even within regions in some States.

(d) and (e) Farmer education is imparted through Agricultural Universities set-up by Indian Council for Agriculture; Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs); Extention Network operated by State Agriculture Departments, and other agencies such as Mitra Krishak Mandals.

Development of Model Fishermen's Villages in Andhra Pradesh

1670. SHRI V. KISHORE CHANDRAS DEO: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether representations have been received for development of Model Fishermens villages in the districts of Visakhapatnam, Srikakulam and West Godavari in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) if so, the details of such representations received in 1998, so far;

(c) whether any report has been called from Andhra Pradesh in this regard;

(d) if so, whether any reply has been received;

(e) whether technical asistance and advice will be given by Government in formulation of such proposals from States; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) One representation from Andhra Pradesh-North National Association of Fishermen has been received during 1998 for construction of houses for fishermen in three villages of West Godavari District.

(c) and (d) The Government of Andhra Pradesh has been directed, vide letter dated 20th May, 1998, to look into the matter and send their comments at the earliest. The comments of the State Government are still awaited.

(e) and (f) The scheme provides for construction of houses for fishermen at a cost not exceeding Rs. 35,000/- per house. The maximum plinth area for a house prescribed under the scheme is 35 sq, metre. the type of houses to be built, within the above parameters, has been left entirely to the discretion of the State Governments. The Central Government renders assistance, whether technical or otherwise, to the State Governments in formulation of proposals for construction of houses under the scheme as and when required.

Schemes for Soil and Water conservation in Maharashtra

1671. DR. SHRIKANT RAMACHANDRA JICHKAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) what are the latest schemes for soil and water conservation as applicable to the farmers of Maharashtra;

(b) what has been the response to these schemes; and

(c) what steps will be taken to make these schemes more popular?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) The Government of India is implementing the following Schemes:

(i) Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Soil Conservation in the Catchments of River Valley Projects (ii) Centrally Sponsored Scheme of National Watershed Development Programme for Rainfed Areas and (iii) Watershed Development Programme (Indo-German) in the State of Maharashtra (iv) Western Ghat Development Programme and (v) Drought Prone Area Programmes.

Besides, the Government of Maharashtra is also implementing a scheme called Integrated Watershed Development Programme (IWDP) under the State plan. All these scheme are largely addressed to the problem of Soil and Water Conservation in the State. the farmers' response to these Schemes is quite satisfactory and encouraging.

(c) Following steps are being taken to make them farmer—oriented in the State : (i) providing suitable institutional arrangements for promoting people's participation; (ii) considerable emphasis on capacity building the human resource development by way of organising need based orientation and training; (iii) Involvement of the watershed community in management of created assets under the projects.

Assistance to Cooperatives of Weaker Sactions

1672. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government provide assitance to cooperatives of weaker section in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of such cooperatives in Maharashtra which were given such assistance during the last three years, yearwise and society wise;

(d) the results achieved therefrom; and

(e) the steps being taken to further strengthen cooperatives of weaker section in the country particularly in Maharashtra?